

The Lakeview Lamp

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” – Psalm 119:105

Feb 22

2009

Whose Decision Is It?

Troy Nicholson

A recent (2-20-09) front-page article in *The Tennessean* bore the title “Lutherans propose deal on gay clergy: Plan would let local churches decide on non-celibate pastors.” The article said, “Officially, all unmarried clergy...must remain celibate. But since 2007, Lutheran bishops have agreed not to discipline gay clergy who are sexually active.” Now a Lutheran task force has recommended that local churches decide the issue for themselves.

Why would a church body support this idea? Because “Lutheran leaders hope the new proposal, which would let churches hire gay pastors involved in lifelong, monogamous relationships, can avoid the bitter conflicts that have plagued other denominations...Lutherans, like many Christians, are divided over homosexuality,” and “the new proposal allows them to agree to disagree.” As a local pastor said, “It’s time for us to make a decision and move on.”

A very important question needs to be considered: Whose decision is it? What gives local churches the right to decide what is right or wrong? Who gave Lutheran bishops the authority to agree not to discipline homosexuals? What right does a “task force” have to recommend anything contrary to God’s word?

God has made clear His decision concerning homosexuality. During the time of the patriarchs He destroyed a city that engaged in the “wickedness” of homosexuality (**Gen 19; Jude 7**). Under the law of Moses He said that “it is an abomination” deserving death (**Lev 18:22; 20:13**). Under the law of Christ He called homosexuality unnatural, indecent, and worthy of “the due penalty of their error” (**Rom 1:26-27**).

Regarding the agreement not to discipline those involved in sexual immorality, one local church leader said that his congregation has avoided disputes over sexuality and that the new proposal will not affect them. Does God’s decision affect them? He condemned the church in Corinth for avoiding a dispute over sexuality (**1 Cor 5**). He commanded them to discipline the sinner involved: “Remove the wicked man from among yourselves” (**:13b**).

Whether it be homosexuality or any other issue, we must respect God’s decision and not be foolish enough to feel that we have a right to decide for ourselves. While we have church autonomy in the sense of being independent of other churches, we are not independent of God. His decision is to be the rule in all churches (**1 Cor 7:17**). May we all live in a way that respects every decision of God.

I Missed Sunday Night Services Because...

(Check the right blank)

Because I had company. (Did your company keep you from work?)

Because there was a good television program I didn't want to miss. (Is that putting first things first?)

Because I feel that once is enough. (Would you recommend that we close the doors on Sunday night and have no service at all?)

Because I was tired. (Would you have been too tired if there had been a \$25.00 reward for going?)

Because I had a date. (Why not bring your date to services? Is your date more important than the Lord?)

Because I don't like the preacher. (You don't worship the preacher, do you?)

Because I love pleasure more than I do the Lord. (**Heb 11:24-26**)

Because I am not interested in preaching the gospel to the lost. (Why do you come on Sunday morning?)

Because the biggest crowd is present on Sunday morning. (You helped make it smaller on Sunday night.)

Because I just didn't want to go. (Why? Are your affections set on things above? – **Col. 3:1-2**)

If you are unwilling to check any of the above “reasons” for missing the Sunday night service, then why not be present Sunday night?

If none of the above fit you personally, but you do not attend on Sunday night, then please add your “reason” to the list. After you have added your own personal “reason,” please take a good look at it and ask yourself honestly, “Will I be willing to face the Lord in judgment and use this as my reason for not being faithful in worship?” Beloved, it is time – no it is past time – that we really evaluate ourselves spiritually. Someday (and we don't know when) the judgment is coming. Will it find us prepared or unprepared?

Being faithful in worship, I am convinced, is the least that we can do. Will the Lord say “Well done” if we have been unfaithful in this area? Would your employer say “Well done” if you were no more faithful on the job (in attendance) than you are in worshipping the Lord? Can we truly say that we love the Lord if we do not desire to worship Him? Can we truthfully say that we want to influence others to be Christians when we willfully miss services of the church and they know it? Rest assured we are influencing them, but it is in the wrong direction. Jesus loved us enough to die on the cross – do we love Him enough to live for Him? Please remember, “Actions speak louder than words.”

– Virgil L. Hale, edited

News and Notes

- * There will be a singing tonight at Katie Greene's home after worship here.
- * A sign-up list for the 2009 last Sunday night singings at members' homes, along with the **Lord's supper preparation duties**, is posted in the back.

Members:

- * Virginia Bryant's knee replacement surgery will be at Sumner Regional Hospital on March 2.
- * Connie Cobern was in the hospital last week with an upper respiratory infection and is back home.

Absent: Vern and Claudia Guest.

New Reports: Bob Nichols (Japan).

Effective Bible Teaching — March 5-8

Series by Ken Weliever

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Session</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Thursday	7:00 p.m.	1	Teaching Today Touches Tomorrow
	8:00 p.m.	2	The Bible: A Teacher Training Manual
Friday	7:00 p.m.	3	Some Principles of Learning
	8:00 p.m.	4	Creative Teaching Techniques
Saturday	9:00 a.m.	5	Visuals are Vital (1)
	10:00 a.m.	6	Visuals are Vital (2)
	1:00 p.m.	7	Teaching Various Ages
	2:00 p.m.	8	Planning the Bible Class Program



*“Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;
yes, our God is compassionate.”*

Psalm 116:5